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Russian Non-Bolshevik Diplomacy and the Issue of International Recognition of the White Movement in 1918-1920[1]

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Abstract. Gaining international recognition for the White Movement was the most important foreign policy task of Russian non-Bolshevik diplomacy. This article traces the evolving discourse of career diplomats, considering this issue at different stages of the Russian Civil War. It shows their deep patriotism, professionalism, and persistency in carrying out the task. However, when the Allies did not share the slogans of the White Movement, the possibility of finding common ground were very limited. At the first stage (summer–autumn 1918), diplomats were cautious about the claims for recognition of numerous Russian non-Bolshevik governments. During the second stage (1918–1919), the issue of recognition played a unique role – the participation of Russian representatives in the peace conference, and therefore in determining the configuration of the post-war world, depended on its success. The resolve of the diplomats to defend Russia's national interests did not suit foreign powers, who did not share the White Movement's slogan about restoring a united and indivisible Russia, its power, and its position in the world. At the third stage (spring–summer 1920), diplomats, losing hope that the White Movement would emerge victorious in the Civil War, withdrew from direct involvement in seeking international recognition for the White Movement. However, they provided all possible technical support to the Head of the Department of External Relations of the Wrangel Government, Peter B. Struve, who assumed this mission. France's recognition of the Sevastopol authorities in the summer of 1920 was limited, did not involve active military assistance, and caused justified scepticism in diplomatic circles.

Keywords: Russian foreign diplomatic corps; Allies; S. D. Sazonov; P. B. Struve; V. A. Maklakov; M. N. Giers

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On the eve of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Russia, which had contributed in no small amount to the victory of the Entente countries, was bound to its allies by treaty obligations and had the right to its share of the "spoils of war," found itself horribly weakened as a result of the outbreak of the Civil War. The Whites had laid claim to continuity from the pre-October power. For the Allies, recognizing as such would entail, at the very least, the most unpleasant prospect of having to justify the refusal to honour their obligations (in particular, the 1915 agreement on the transfer of Constantinople and the straits to Russia), return Russian property left in the allied countries, unblock Russian bank accounts abroad, and listen to Russian politicians' point of view when it came to determining the configuration of the future world order. Such magnanimity from the great powers was incredibly unlikely.

As things stood, all significant international issues were resolved in Paris, where the heads of the Entente met: the allied countries, along with neutral states, "toed the line" of the great powers in their decisions regarding Russia. And it was from the Entente that White Russia, appealing to the concepts of allied relations and military brotherhood, expected recognition and help. But negotiating with the losing side in 1919 would have been disastrous for relations with the victors, and futile in terms of obtaining assistance for the internal struggle in Russia.

During the Civil War, various forces took on the issue of the international recognition of the non-Bolshevik Russian government: Kolchak's government structures, the Russian public, Russian emigres abroad, and even the Russian diplomatic corps, a remnant of the pre-Revolution Imperial power.

Having recognized the Provisional Government in March 1917, diplomats saw no reason to cooperate with the Bolsheviks in November. Not that they intended to leave the political arena – rather, they argued that they should continue their activities because not everyone in Russia had submitted to Soviet power. In November 1917, the diplomatic corps established the Council of Ambassadors, which operated for a whole year without a government whose policies it could implement. The activities of the diplomatic corps during the Civil War extended far beyond its normal competence. It had its own way of doing things and pursued a line that did not always align with the position of the Russian authorities.

The issue of the international recognition of Kolchak's government has been dealt with to one degree or other by historians specializing in the Russian Civil War. Together, these works create a detailed picture, representing various ideological approaches, with interesting hypotheses that the researchers either confirmed or refuted (see, for example, Shtein 1949; Thompson 1966; Ullman 1961, 1968; Ermakov, Grishanin 2002; Emcov 2002; Karlej 2017; Smolin 2017; Shmelev 2017; Chemakin 2020).

However, until now, the process of how the Russian diplomatic corps went about developing a strategy for gaining international recognition of the Kolchak government and the moves it made to do this have remained wholly understudied. That notwithstanding, the work of Russian diplomats at the time could not but attract the attention

of researchers. For instance, back in the mid-1960s, the American historian John Thompson noted the efforts of Sergei Sazonov and Vasily Maklakov to unite the Kolchak and Denikin governments (Thompson 1966: 271). All the while, the thesis we propose – that the Russian diplomatic corps acted as an independent political force during the Civil War – has not yet been established in science. As a rule, researchers do not separate the activities of Russian diplomats working abroad at the time from the policies of the governments of Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel. However, some assessments of the work of the diplomatic corps to ensure international recognition of the White Movements have been made. Anatoly Shmelev, for example, concludes that the wait-and-see approach adopted by the Omsk government paralysed all the active plans of the foreign policy department (Shmelev 2017: 34, 35). And Anatoly Smolin points out that the loss of Russian diplomacy was a consequence of its representatives being geographically isolated from the events that were taking place in Russia, and because they were still, at the height of the Civil War, holding on the ideas of the imperial period (Smolin 2017: 212, 213).

Our task in this paper is to trace the transformation of the attitude of the diplomatic corps to the issue of the recognition of the non-Bolshevik government in Russia, in both theoretical and practical terms; clarify the issues on which its opinions differed from those of the governments it represented on the international stage; and identify the extent of its participation in the work to recognize the government of Baron Wrangel.

The materials used in the preparation of this paper includes published documents[2] and memoirs (Mikhailovsky 1992; Memoirs of a General… 1992; Abrikosov 2008). However, the main sources were the collections of the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (AVPRI), the Leeds Russian Archive (LRA), and a collection of documents on Russian emigration of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace records, in copies transferred to GARF (fond 10003).

The Issue of the Recognition of Non-Bolshevik Governments in the Second Half of 1918

For the White Movement, it was of paramount importance to obtain the recognition of its government by the Allied powers. Shmelev summed up what this would have meant for the Whites in terms of the possibilities in would have opened up: "recognition of the territorial integrity of the state, the unfreezing of loans for the Provisional

[2] *"What We Witnessed…": Correspondence of Former Tsarist Diplomats (1934–1940).* In 2 Volumes. Moscow, 1998; *"Strictly Private and Confidential!" B. A. Bakhmeteff – V. A. Maklakov, 1919–1951.* Moscow, 2001. vol. 1; *Russian Military Emigration in the 1920s–1940s. Documents and Materials.* In 10 Volumes. Moscow (Kursk), 1998 (2017); *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939 in 27 vols. First series.* 1949. London. Vol. 3 (hereinafter DBFP); Pipes R. 1963. Les relations diplomatiques du gouvernement Wrangel en Crimée, 1920. *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique.* 4(4-4), P. 401–435.

Government and the ability to take out new lines of credit, and the return of Russian property that had fallen into the hands of Germans, and subsequently the Allies, such as gold, merchant ships, weapons, and other stocks. Closely related to the issue of recognition were questions about the continuity of politics and rights (the inviolability of treaties between the Imperial and Provisional governments, which were recognized not only by the Omsk government, but also by the Allies), equality of in relations with other states, cohesion within the Russia and the subordination of other Russian governments to the Omsk government, the official status and position of representatives of the Omsk government and their authority to negotiate and purchase weapons and supplies from various states" (Shmelev 2017: 15) .

It is important to understand that the limits of Russian diplomacy's competencies in the new socio-political climate had expanded significantly. According to Sergei Melgunov, as many as 19 anti-Bolshevik governments had appeared in Russia by August 1918 (Melgunov 2004: 294). Being "under the omophorion of the grace of continuity," as people of the time wrote regarding the pre-revolutionary days, the diplomatic corps happily found itself playing the role of external regulator of the internal political struggle in Russia. Anti-Bolshevik movements tried to establish relations with them in the hope of gaining additional trump cards and authority among similar entities. Russian diplomacy was faced with another "internal" task: to promote the unity of the newly created governments and place them within a relevant hierarchy.[3] The circumstances at the time meant that diplomats had the prerogative to decide which of them they supported and wished to represent in the international arena.

Back in late 1917, the diplomatic corps had decided that it would cooperate with all anti-Bolshevik entities that might appear in the homeland. What is more, at a meeting held in December 1918, the ambassadors took the unprecedented step of inviting the Allied powers to de facto recognize the authorities that had formed on the outlying lands of the Russian Empire. The recognition of the governments that had sprung up in the Russian territories proper was an entirely different affair

In March 1918, the ambassador to China, Prince Nikolai Kudashev, laughed off the request to facilitate the recognition by the Allies of the government that had been established in Tomsk, which, as he wrote, had fled under the pressure of the situation to Harbin, saying that, with the help of foreign troops, the government would have no problem dealing with the Bolsheviks.[4] Dmitry Abrikosov, who worked at the Russian Embassy in Tokyo, later recalled numerous organizations in Siberia claiming to be the true anti-Bolshevik government. It all started with a telegram to the representative office, "signed by people we had never heard of, insisting that we present it [the organization that had sent the telegram – *author's note*] to the Japanese government" (Abrikosov 2008: 333).

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[3] See, for example: Dolbezhev sends Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Prince A. Kudashev's telegram to Omsk, and a copy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 12, 1918. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 395. l. 107.

[4] Prince Kudashev to V. A. Maklakov, telegram no. 315, March 28, 1918. *GARF*. f. 6851. op. 1. d. 3. l. 453.

In July 1918, the issue of the recognition of the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly was raised.[5] Former Chairman of the Provisional Government Alexander Kerensky actively advocated for this. He and the Russian Ambassador in Paris Vasily Maklakov had several meetings with French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, from which they gleaned that the French were willing to support the anti-Bolshevik government in Russia as part of an agreed policy of the Allies. Further, the French leaders made it clear that the Committee would have to prove its viability by, at the very least, managing to exist for a number of months (Tongour 1979: 69–70).

Created in September 1918, the Ufa government immediately proclaimed itself the successor to the Provisional All-Russian Government. This changed the situation in the anti-Bolshevik camp, and the diplomatic corps would have to regroup to discuss further steps. However, because diplomats are not authorized to influence domestic policy, some Russian representatives (in Sweden, the United States, China, and Mongolia) went ahead and informed the authorities on the countries where they were stationed that a new Provisional All-Russian Government had been created. Not waiting for a consolidated decision of the diplomatic corps on the issue, they submitted official requests for the recognition of the Ufa government as the sole legal successor to legitimate power in Russia.[6] However, Washington, for one, refused to recognize the newly formed government until it received concrete evidence that it had the requisite powers and popular support.

Meanwhile, the most experienced member of the diplomatic corps, Ambassador to Italy Mikhail von Giers, replied to the Directory that the Allies approved of its programme, and that they may be willing to provide assistance, given that other anti-Bolshevik entities within Russia recognize its status as the central government.[7] This came to determine Giers' activities to achieve the international recognition of the newly formed government.[8]

The issue became a topic of discussion in the diplomatic corps. It was a tense time. The First World War was coming to an end, and a peace congress was just around the corner. The Soviet government had pulled Russia out of the war, an act of "betrayal" of Russia's allied duty from which the Bolsheviks' opponents distanced themselves (Mironova 2013: 73–86), believing that three years of struggle, side-by-side, had given the country every right to sum up the results of the war on equal terms with the victors. It was in this spirit, "to have a government so as to convene a congress,"[9] that diplomats considered the issue of recognizing the Directory. Von Giers believed that if Ufa could

[5] The Committee was established in early June 1918 in territories that had been liberated from the Bolsheviks with the help of Czech military contingents. In reality, its power extended to the territory of the Middle Volga region, the Kama region, and the Southern Urals only.

[6] National Archives of Sweden. UD. 1902. vol. 275. III.; *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 555. l. 16, 30.

[7] Mikhail von Giers to Kudashev, for Avksentiev, secret telegram no. 111, October 17, 1918. *AVPRI*. f. 187. op. 524. No. 3517. l. 62.

[8] Von Giers to Maklakov, telegram no. 113, October 9(22), 1918. *AVPRI*. l. 108.

[9] Ibid.

establish connections with other anti-Bolshevik entities in the country that would accept it as a central government,[10] then they could apply to Russia's allies for official recognition.[11] Russia's Charge d'Affaires in London Konstantin Nabokov agreed.

Alexander Kerensky, who was not afforded a position within the White Movement yet continued to actively intervene in its affairs, demanded that Russian diplomats take immediate steps to initiate recognition. Vasily Maklakov, Russia's Ambassador in Paris, was sceptical. He did not see what the Ufa Directory could offer that made it a better proposition that the other governments that had sprung up in Siberia and doubted the success of this "play, a typical compromise of party leaders."[12] The Ambassador believed that demanding recognition was itself a sign of the flippant attitude of the new body.[13]

Having been met with the bemusement of the great powers, the Ufa authorities tried to get in through the back door. The socialist revolutionaries who had created the Directory and who enjoyed friendly relations with the national Czechoslovak movement were hoping that Czech politicians would be favourably disposed to "historical" Russia. Two days before the proclamation of the state of Czechoslovakia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Government of Siberia established the post of diplomatic representative to the National Committee of Czechoslovakia, nominating former Consul General of Russia in Prague S. V. Zhukovsky for the position. It also expressed its readiness, on the basis of reciprocity, to welcome a representative from Czechoslovakia.[14]

In November 1918, having received instructions from Omsk, Maklakov raised the issue at a meeting in Paris of an exchange of diplomatic missions between White Russia and Czechoslovakia. However, the government of the young European state treated the proposal with caution. The collection of internal correspondence in the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovakia contains two versions of Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš' response to Maklakov (dated November 14 and 21).[15] In the first letter, Beneš suggests postponing consideration of the issue pending a decision of the allied countries, primarily France and Great Britain. Hoping to sweeten the pill somewhat, Beneš wrote that the Prague's representative in Russia had already been given assurances that he would retain his functions in Omsk, which would be made official as soon as Czechoslovakia officially recognizes, alongside the allied countries, the new Russian government. However, a week later, Beneš penned another response that did not include the portion about Czechoslovakia basing its decision on the policy

[10] Maklakov to the Ambassador in Washington, telegram no. 308, October 11, 1918; Russian Ambassador in Rome to the Russian Envoy in Beijing, for Avksentiev, secret telegram no. 111, October 17, 1918. *AVPRI*. l. 62; von Giers to the Ambassador, October 9(22), 1918. No. 113, the same to London. *AVPRI*. l. 123, 62, 108.

[11] M. von Giers to the Ambassador, telegram no. 104, October 7, 1918. *GARF*. f. 10003. op. 2. k. 5.

[12] Maklakov to the Ambassador in Washington, telegram no. 308, October 11, 1918. *AVPRI*. f. 187. op. 524. d. 3517. l. 123.

[13] Excerpt from a letter from V. A. Maklakov, recipient unknown. No. 186. *GARF*. f. 6851. op. 1. d. 6. l. 11.

[14] P. V. Volgogodsky to Maklakov, telegram no. 13, October 13(26), 1918. Ibid. d. 8. l. 8.

[15] Archiv minsterstva zahraničních věcí (AMZV). f. Pařížský archiv. Kart. IX.

of the Entente, and the passage about the representative of Prague in Omsk was supplemented with a proposal to create a like-for-like situation – that is, the Foreign Minister expressed a readiness to accept a Russian representative who would carry out his duties in an unofficial capacity until formal recognition.

It is unclear why the Kolchak government, when it returned to this issue, decided to appoint V. G. Zhukovksy Special Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary to Prague by decree of January 17, 1919,[16] but nothing good came of it. Zhukovksy remained in Omsk, in the position of Comrade Minister of Foreign Affairs, apparently waiting for the Czechoslovak government to give its consent. In the summer of 1919, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Omsk government, Sergei Sazonov, set about resolving the matter. As a seasoned diplomat, he did not insist that the issue, which had in any case been neglected and "ruined" by incompetent meddling, be fixed post-haste. Seizing upon Beneš' proposal, Sazonov sent an unofficial mission to Prague. Zhukovksy's name was not brought up in connection with the post of Special Envoy, and the mission would be headed by V. T. Rafalsky, a lowly Ministry of Foreign Affairs employee, as Consul and Charge d'Affaires.[17] But that was later. In the meantime, the authorities in Siberia continued to try and establish diplomatic relations.

In early November 1918, the head of the Omsk Directory's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Y. Klyuchnikov, decided that winding down the activities of the local authorities and transferring all of the Siberian government's powers to the All-Russian Government would help expedite the issue of its international recognition. To this end, he instructed his Ambassador in Tokyo, Vasily Krupensky, to put out feelers regarding the possibility of Japanese recognition of the Omsk government, in case the Allied powers continued to drag their heels on the issue.[18] However, this attempt did not bring the desired result: Japanese government officials promised to bring up the matter with the Allies, but only after they had received information from their agents in Siberia.[19]

On November 4, the British government passed a decision to recognize the Omsk Directory as a *de facto* government. Shmelev cites the English historian Richard Ullman, who claims that this implied recognition as a local government. As the British government was drafting a congratulatory telegram announcing the recognition, a coup took place in Omsk, and on November 19, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Robert Cecil told Nabokov that "Britain had been ready to recognize the Directorate, only to find it had been swept away. Who could tell whether the same thing would not happen again within another three weeks?" (Shmelev 2017: 25).

[16] *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 97. l. 57.
[17] AMZV. f. Pařížský archiv. Kart. IX.
[18] To the Ambassador in Tokyo, secret telegram no. 42/209, November 7, 1918. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 555. l. 57.
[19] Ambassador in Tokyo to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, telegram no. 327, November 9, 1918. Ibid. l. 58.

The Struggle for the Recognition of Kolchak's Government

The end of the war radically changed the situation in the world and in Europe. The issue of protecting Russia's interests at the peace conference had migrated from the realm of the theoretical to the realm of urgent practical action. This, in turn, made the matter of recognizing the Russian government of utmost importance and urgency for the White Movement's politicians. The cessation of hostilities and the possibility of establishing contacts with European Russia brought another major force in the anti-Bolshevik struggle onto the international stage, and that was General Anton Denikin's Volunteer Army.

By that time, Russian diplomats working abroad had developed conflicting ideas about the situation back home and the issue of recognition. Maklakov constantly flip-flopped. The day after the coup in Omsk, Maklakov, who had yet to hear about the events, remarked that, "in connection with the events in the South and reports from the field," there had been positive developments in the matter of recognition. The Ambassador was all too eager to believe the representatives of the Entente countries when they assured him that as soon as the agreement between Omsk and Yekaterinodar was finalized and "our [White Russia – *author's note*] ability to put the national question above party issues is proven," the hemming and hawing would, for the most part, stop.[20] A few days later, he came to the conclusion that Kolchak's rise to power would delay international recognition and advised him to put Western governments and the public at ease by declaring he had taken power in order to restore order and unify Russia pending the convening of a Constituent Assembly. Maklakov asked his colleague in Washington, Boris Bakhmeteff, to take all measures to ensure that the November coup would not be seen in the United States as a "triumph of reactionary officers and a blow to democracy."[21]

In the autumn of 1918, Konstantin Nabokov became worried about party strife in Siberia. He was unhappy about the appearance of the "Yekaterinodar Group" on the political scene, believing it to be far more right-wing than the forces that had taken power in Omsk, and was afraid of new complications at a time when the anti-Bolshevik groups were supposed to look like a united front to the Allies. "With all this internal discord, we will never achieve recognition as an all-Russian government," he wrote.[22] Having explained the concerns of the British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that "it will be difficult to recognize the Russian government if such frequent and drastic changes occur [in it – author's note]" to the French, Maklakov recommended

[20] Maklakov to the Omsk Ministry of Foreign Affairs, telegram no. 398, November 19, 1918. *AVPRI*. f. 187. op. 524. d. 3517. l. 319.
[21] Maklakov to the Omsk Ministry of Foreign Affairs, telegram no. 418, November 24 1918. Ibid., l. 342.
[22] K. D. Nabokov to Maklakov, telegram no. 149, November 18 1918. *AVPRI*. f. 187. op. 524. d. 3517. l. 315.

taking a timeout, not raising the issue for the time being, and continuing "to work in harmony with military and diplomatic representatives of Great Britain located in Siberia."[23] Giers believed that the only way to guarantee recognition was by merging Omsk with other Russian governments pursuing similar goals.[24] And this is precisely what Russian diplomats, together with Russian social activists in Paris, focused on achieving. And it would take them until the spring of 1919 to see their efforts bear fruit, when the government of the north of Russia, followed by the government in the South, submitted to Omsk (Thompson 1966: 269).

The status of the issue was naturally affected by Moscow's policies. The foreign policy bodies of the Soviet Republic were actively involved in the struggle to establish contacts of any kind with Russia's former allies. The People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs repeatedly sent notes to the Supreme War Council of the Entente and the President of the United States and appealed to former allied and neutral states – 11 such attempts were made following the end of the First World War (Sergeev 2019: 208). While these messages did not typically elicit a response of any kind, they would certainly have had an effect on political circles in the West. What is more, in contrast to the instability demonstrated by the anti-Soviet governments in Russia, the Bolsheviks showed amazing resilience and manage to take control of the situation in the territory they administered. A little later, the British and American leaders would come to see the Soviets as the *de facto* government of Russia, and would even discuss the possibility of inviting Soviet representatives to the peace conference. Unlike the Anglo-Saxons, the French were opposed to Russia's participation in the forum in principle, and they were more inclined to see the Bolsheviks' opponents as the force that represented Russia. At a conference meeting on January 21, for example, General Louis Franchet d'Espèrey stated that "Lvov and Sazonov were the best and most reputable of the Russian people."[25]

The reluctance to cooperate with those who wanted to revive the Russia of the past, which was evident when it came to all kinds of issues, did not, however, prevent the Allied governments from establishing representative offices in Omsk, nor from making far-reaching promises to the leaders of the White Movement regarding recognition and participation in the peace conference. Klyuchnikov recalled a number of comments to this effect by responsible statesmen of the Allied countries: French Ambassador Joseph Noulens in a speech given at a ceremonial meeting of the Arkhangelsk City Duma; Sir John Eliot at a banquet in Vladivostok; French General Maurice Janin; Professor Tomáš Masaryk, and others.[26] These figures were far from the quiet offices of

[23] Nabokov to Maklakov, telegram no. 170, November 25 1918. Ibid. l. 348.
[24] Von Giers to Maklakov, November 30, 1918. *GARF*. f. 10003. k. 86. R. 5.
[25] Ibid. R. 298.
[26] Russian representation at the peace conference (conversation with the Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yuri V. Klyuchnikov), n.d., December 2018. *GARF*. f. 193. op. 1. d. 9. l. 12.

the European capitals, so it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty whether they were making empty promises, deliberately misleading their counterparts, or whether they truly believed in what they were saying. Whatever the case may be, these advances seriously muddied the assessments of the situation on the Russian side.

Similar assurances voiced in Paris should be viewed as a deliberate attempt to disorientate Russians, to make sure they were living in a world of illusions. Conflicting statements by representatives of the Allied countries were superimposed on top of statements that Russian diplomats had typically used in the 19th and early 20th centuries – fears of "hostility" and "insincerity" on the part of the Old World and Japan (Tsvetkov 2009: 430). In these conditions, the Russian diplomatic corps oscillated between elation with the fact that success was just around the corner and disappointment when the realization hit them that recognition was not on the cards.

In late January 1919, Sergei Sazonov came to the realization that the only thing standing in the way of the recognition of the Omsk government was the lack of a unified administrative authority, without which "it is impossible to achieve participation in the work of the conference even on an official basis."[27] The true attitude of the victors to the situation in Russia was most clearly expressed in the idea to hold a conference on the Princes' Islands with the participation of all the political forces in the country, including the Bolsheviks. For an entire month, Russian diplomats in Paris were preoccupied with the project, pushing back against it. Given these circumstances, the Omsk government elected, while maintaining its dignity, to temporarily remove the issue of recognition from the agenda.[28] In the latter half of February, when the issue had been moved to the back burner, the question of Russian representatives taking part in the peace conference was no longer raised. This did not mean, however, that the issue of recognition had lost its significance. Quite the opposite, it became even more pressing. But the Allies were in no hurry to address it.

In the absence of an internationally recognized government, the Russian Political Conference (RPC) was set up in Paris in December 1918 as a stop-gap government on behalf of which a delegation representing the interests of Russia could participate at the conference. Almost as soon as it had been formed, this body submitted an application to the peace conference for recognition of the Omsk government as an All-Russian government,[29] and declared that it was ready to represent the interests of Russia on an equal basis with the other powers. These declarations were met with silence. But the Russian diplomats refused to drop the issue moving forward. As soon as the matter with the conference on Prinkipo island (the Princes' Archipelago) was closed,

[27] S. D. Sazonov to A. A. Neratov, January 28, 1919. LRA, MS 780/10; V. A. Maklakov addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Yekaterinodar (from Sazonov), Secret telegram no. 147, January 28 and 30, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 58. l. 2; op. 1. d. 115. l. 8; op. 1. d. 617. l. 53; f. 6851. op. 1. d. 33. l. 193.

[28] I. I. Sukin to I. G. Loris–Melnikov, n.d. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 265. l. 28.

[29] Circular from Prince Lvov dated January 3, 1919. *GARF*. f. 5942. op. 1. d. 148. l. 17.

Bakhmeteff sent a memorandum to President Wilson's adviser Edward M. House outlining the arguments of the Whites for recognition in terms designed to appeal to Western liberals (Thompson 1966: 280).

The Whites would have to wait until April 1919 before they saw any progress on this most important of matters. Sazonov described the overall political situation at the time as extremely unstable. The coup in Hungary and its connections with Moscow caused concern among Western politicians about a potential world revolution. Sazonov conceded that the Allied armies were too tired to effectively combat this threat, and that the social tension in the Entente countries did not help matters either. He pointed out that left-wing elements had obtained official statements from the Italian, French and English governments ruling out military intervention in Russia. As a compromise, the Allies attempted to put forward the idea of setting up a cordon around Romania, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The agenda included the issue of military assistance to these countries to combat the spread of Bolshevism.[30]

In the meantime, Kolchak's offensive, which had been dubbed the "Flight to the Volga," had seen great results since March 1919. Under the circumstances, it would seem that the Whites did not have a leg to stand on in terms of recognition. However, in early April, Sazonov stated that "the attitude of the Allied powers towards the Omsk government is still restrained." He wrote that, "the lack of faith in the government's durability, the lack of trust in it, means that we cannot expect speedy recognition, or even open solidarity."[31] Rumours swirled that Lenin's peace proposals, which the Americans had brought from Moscow, had placed the issue of recognition of the Soviet government on the agenda.[32] These concerns were shared by Sergei Uget, Charge d'Affaires in Washington at the time, who was alarmed by the increased coverage in the American press of the rumours emanating from Paris about the likely recognition of Soviet power by England and the United States.[33] Konstantin Nabokov wrote that Woodrow Wilson favoured recognizing the Bolsheviks, and this position was supported by some influential members of the British delegation at the Versailles Conference.[34] Among the arguments of those who called for establishing diplomatic relations with Moscow, he named the lack of unity among the various anti-Bolshevik camps, the lack of confidence in the success of Yudenich's offensive, even with Allied support, and the long-standing image of the White Movement being reactionary in nature.[35] In this regard, Nabokov asked the RPC to repeat in the coming days the declaration of the unified government on the principles of the fight against the Bolsheviks and to indicate that

[30] S. D. Sazonov. No. 622. April 7, 1919. *AVPRI*. f. 188. op. 761. d. 1542. l. 207.
[31] Sazonov to Sukin, telegram no. 598, April 3,1919. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 498.
[32] Nabokov to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, telegram no. 163, April 10, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 334. l. 102.
[33] S. A. Uget to Sazonov. telegram no. 336, April 2, 1919. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 465.
[34] Nabokov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, telegram no. 163, April 10, 1919. Ibid. l. 102.
[35] Charge d'Affaires (London) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Secret telegram no. 172, April 10, 1919. Ibid. l. 110.

Bolshevism must be cut off at the head – in Petrograd and Moscow.[36] In turn, Uget recommended setting up an interview for Admiral Kolchak or Vologodsky, "with a representative of the Associated Press, in the spirit of reaching the general American public."[37] Summing up the discussion in absentia, Sazonov drew the attention of the Omsk government to the weakness of the White Movement and the danger in this situation of indulging any desire to look for new alternatives.[38]

In turn, the RPC, cognizant of the need to unite the White Movement and recognize the Kolchak government, continued the line of unity of forces it had been pursuing since the second half of 1918. The meeting called on the centres of the anti-Bolshevik struggle to officially recognize the government in Omsk as the "unifying and dominant power" as the Provisional All-Russian Government.[39] Determined to resolve this issue, the RPC sent a delegation to the south of Russia. On April 30, Arkhangelsk government declared it subordination to Kolchak, followed by the Yekaterinodar government on May 20.

Meanwhile, the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (which itself remained unrecognized due to ongoing territorial disputes with Italy) set about achieving a rapprochement with the "national" Russian government. In late March, Belgrade emissary Jovan Milanković arrived in Omsk, requesting that he be accepted as a diplomatic representative.[40] April 1, the envoy to Athens, Elim Demidov, reported that Prince Alexander of Serbia, upon his return from Paris, expressed his intention to "take the initiative on the issue of recognition of the Russian government in Omsk."[41] During negotiations in Paris with the Kingdom's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sazonov delicately raised the issue of mutual recognition of governments. In Omsk, he wrote of this meeting that "the manifestation of Slavic solidarity at the present moment is particularly desirable."[42]

In mid-April, Demidov, encouraged by his meeting with Prince Alexander, proposed broaching the subject with the Greek government. "The recognition of the Omsk government by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes," he wrote to the minister in Paris, "could, it would seem, prompt the allied Greek government to such a decision. If you consider this desirable, as I do, then I could raise the issue with the Foreign Ministry, although I would consider it more practical for you to speak directly on this matter with Venizelos, who has repeatedly expressed to me his sympathy for

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[36] Nabokov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Secret telegram no. 172, April 10, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 334. l. 110.
[37] Uget to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Secret telegram no. 420, April 19, 1919. Ibid. d. 547. l. 1.
[38] Sazonov to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Omsk, telegram no. 799, April 25, 1919. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 881.
[39] Ambassador (Paris) to Minister of Foreign Affairs, copy of secret telegram no. 793, April 24, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 334. l. 100.
[40] Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ambassador in Paris, for Sazonov, copy of secret telegram no. 55, April 5, 1919. Ibid. d. 396. l. 12.
[41] E. M. Demidov to Maklakov. April 1, 1919. telegram no. 121. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 498.
[42] Minister of Foreign Affairs S. D. Sazonov to Head of the Ministry I. I. Sukin, copy of secret telegram no. 650, April 8, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 396. l. 10.

our situation and his confidence in the speedy restoration of Russia."[43] However, Sazonov considered such a demarche premature.[44] Evidently, he was aware that Greece would not take an independent stance on the issue. In April 1919, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes officially recognized the Omsk government and established diplomatic relations with it, thus becoming the first and only state to recognize the Kolchak's legitimacy.[45]

World leaders, meanwhile, were still dragging their heels, insisting that the authorities in Russia had to consolidate their power and prove their vitality. It appears that the West was not encouraged by the trends that were developing in the anti-Bolshevik movement. There were no idealists among those who had gathered at Versailles. Shmelev rightly notes that "it was not about democracy, liberalism and justice" there, "but about the division on the world, about power and spheres of influence" (Shmelev 2017: 44). The slogan of a "Great, United and Indivisible Russia within the borders of 1914" put forward by the Whites was not appealing in any way to the Western powers, which now had the opportunity to weaken one of their most powerful rivals in the Old World.

We have to admit here that this would not have been a pleasant discussion for the Allied powers. The one-sided class approach of Soviet historiography, which could never stray from the thesis that the bourgeois governments supported the Russian anti-Bolsheviks unconditionally, does not stand up to criticism. Let us try to imagine what the world leaders saw before them, what they had to deal with.

At that time, Russia was represented by at least three major forces: the Soviet government, which had proven its stability; the White Movement that opposed it; and the separatist movements that had emerged on the borderlands and which were afraid of the spread of Bolshevism to their territory and at the same time sought to gain preferences in the context of a weakening Russia.

The powers refused to recognize the Bolsheviks in late 1917 – early 1918. It is likely that the politicians of these countries would have preferred that the forces of order triumph in Russia, which, of course, did not mean the Bolsheviks. However, as regards their attitude toward the West, the leaders of the anti-Bolshevik forces clearly lacked "realism" and a willingness to bargain or buy help with concessions, including the surrender of the country's positions in the world. Having their own interests in the region, the Allies partly supported the separatists and gave them certain assurances.

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[43] Demidov to Maklakov, for Sazonov, telegram no. 148, April 13, 1919. *GARF*. f. 10003. op. 2. P. 3.

[44] Sazonov to Demidov, telegram no. 758, April 21, 1919. Ibid.

[45] Only King Nicholas I of Montenegro, on behalf of the country that had exiled him, announced that he recognized the government headed by Admiral Kolchak, "as the sole, unified representative of Russia." See: Maklakov to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Omsk, telegram No. 1141, certified copy to A. A. Neratov, telegram no. 5 May 29, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 354. l. 84.

A gradual shift in the mood of the great powers could be seen in late April 1919. The Council of Four[46] was aware both of the impossibility of establishing a lasting peace and a new configuration of Europe as long as the Civil War raged in Russia, and of resolving issues that affected Russia's interests in the affairs of the East and the West without Russia's participation.[47] By that time, the leaders of the great powers had become convinced that they would never be able to come to an agreement with the Bolsheviks or influence them. Sazonov believed that, among other factors, the military successes of the Siberian and Volunteer armies had been decisive. And Shmelev, having analysed the situation years after the events, came to the same conclusion: "It was the possibility of a quick victory for the Whites in the Spring of 1919 that worried the Allies: they were afraid of being late to Whites' victory party and not being let in" (Shmelev 2017: 52). The powers were forced to address the problem. But before that, in early May, they recognized Finland's independence.

In the latter half of May, the Japanese government unexpectedly put forward an initiative to recognize the Omsk government. As the Russian Ambassador Vasily Krupensky wrote, Tokyo, through its representatives in Washington, London, Paris and Rome, appealed to the governments of the four powers with the proposal to open discussions on the conditions for officially recognizing the Provisional Government in Omsk. For its part, Japan set the usual condition – for the new government to assume all the debts and international obligations of its legal predecessors (before the Bolshevik coup) – and nothing more.

The experienced and cautious Russian representative in Tokyo was in no hurry to pass on this information to his colleagues, apparently checking its authenticity.[48] However, on May 21, N. Kudashev and K. Gulkevich reported that news of the messages from the Japanese ambassadors reached Beijing and Stockholm, respectively.[49]

In Russia, there was increasing confidence that the eastern and western fronts were about to merge, which would mean the unification of governments. The head of Denikin's Department of External Relations gave assurances that no misunderstandings would occur during this merger, and even sent a copy of the text that had been prepared for the announcement of the event.[50]

In late May, the Council of Four postponed all pressing matters and turned to the consideration of the "Russian question."

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[46] The Council of Four (or Big Four) was a clandestine union of the leading countries of the anti-German coalition at the Paris Peace Conference: Woodrow Wilson (United States), David Lloyd George (Great Britain), Vittorio Orlando (Italy), and Georges Clemenceau (France).

[47] Sazonov to P. V. Vologodsky, telegram no. 68, June 17, 1919. *GARF*. f. 193. op. 1. d. 16. l. 64.

[48] V. N. Krupensky to the minister, telegram no. 189, May 22, 1919. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 1309; GARF. f. 200. op. 1. d. 334 l. 89.

[49] Secret telegram from N. A. Kudashev to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, telegram no. 383, May 21, 1919; K. N. Gulkevich to the minister, telegram no. 254, May 21, 1919. AVPRI. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 1285, 1291.

[50] Bar. Iskul to the minister, telegram no. 213, May 22, 1919. Ibid. l. 1285, 1308.

As far as the public in White Russia was concerned – and this opinion has often been repeated in works on the history of Russia during this period – the Allied memorandum of late May 1919 and the negotiations that followed concerned the recognition of the Kolchak government. Sazonov wrote to Omsk on May 27, 1919: "I received word that the Council of Four in Paris had decided to recognize the government of Admiral Kolchak on the following conditions…"[51] The Soviet historian B. Shtein would call Lloyd George and Wilson the initiators of the recognition of the Kolchak government (Shtein 1949: 231).

In the meantime, the memorandum addressed by the heads of state to Omsk does not contain a single word about recognition. And in what capacity would the Omsk government have been recognized? As a regional (Siberian) government? Or as an All-Russian government? These questions were not addressed. Western historians who have studied this tend to believe that it was the former (Ullman 1968: 231). There was no clash with the Russian point of view that Kolchak's government was a national government because the question was never raised at the practical level in the discussion of recognition.

In May 1919, Sazonov made it clear that he did not expect the conference to address the "Russian question." He was in London at the time, where he was busy conducting negotiations with various political forces in England, much to his satisfaction. Meanwhile, the Allies deemed it necessary to transmit the document that had been drafted through Kolchak's official representatives in Paris, and to bring them up to date on the matter.[52]

Russia's ambassadors in various countries learned about what was happening through their own channels. Giers immediately informed the minister in a personal telegram on the terms of the memorandum that was being discussed and drafted in Lloyd George's secretariat:

1. A Constituent Assembly immediately must be convened after Moscow has been taken. If general elections cannot be held at this time, the Constituent Assembly of 1917 must be temporarily convened.
2. Zemstvo and municipal elections must be held.
3. The government must pledge to avoid class privilege.
4. The borders of Poland and Finland are to be determined by the arbitration court of the League of Nations.
5. The issue of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will be resolved through direct negotiations with the assistance of the League of Nations.
6. The government must commit to joining the League of Nations and submit to general arms control measures.[53]

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[51] Minister of Foreign Affairs to Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 252, May 27, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200 op. 1. d. 334. l. 76.
[52] Maklakov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, secret telegram no. 1140, May 29, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 336. l. 125.
[53] Maklakov to Sazonov (London). May 26, 1919. Delivering personal telegram no. 1111 from M. N. Giers. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 1356.

Interestingly, there is no mention of a requirement to take on the debts of the pre-Bolshevik governments.

The Council of Four was pleased with the document, but did not make a decision because the Japanese representative was absent.[54]

The message from Paris made the minister furious: "I find the conditions set forth to be unacceptable as they violate Russia's sovereign rights,"[55] he said immediately upon reading the note to his most trusted colleague, Giers. He could not hide his disappointment in front of Lord Curzon, who took the trouble to acquaint the Russian minister during the latter's stay in London with the text of the memorandum approved by the Council of Five.[56] The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that Sazonov was far from showing any satisfaction with the supposed recognition of the Powers. It seems that he was unpleasantly surprised by the latter's tendency to find fault with the conditions and demanded that Admiral Kolchak have the right to change or revise them.[57] In early June, Clemenceau had reason to say at the Council of Four that Sazonov was categorically against the memorandum sent to Kolchak.[58]

Sazonov was not the only one to have doubts. Nabokov and the Foreign Office representative also voiced their comments. Nabokov was particularly concerned about the part regarding the convening of the Constituent Assembly of 1917, in which the Bolsheviks played a prominent role, and whose deputies included, among other people, Lenin and Trotsky.[59]

However, world leaders knew exactly what they were doing. The British sought to drive a wedge between Kolchak and his diplomatic service. In a report dated June 5, Nabokov relayed a conversation with the Assistant Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, who considered it necessary to present a whole series of arguments for Omsk to agree to the conditions.[60] And Lloyd George, who had received a message telling him that Sazonov was unhappy with the conditions set by the Allies, ordered the British representatives in Omsk to convince Kolchak not to listen to his foreign minister.[61]

Sazonov quickly pulled himself together. The day after receiving Giers' telegram, he wrote: "… we must weigh the wording of our response to the demands on which the Powers wish to condition the *recognition of Admiral Kolchak's government* [the italics here and later have been added by the author for emphasis] very carefully, so that, in

[54] Ibid.

[55] Sazonov to Giers, telegram no. 257, May 27, 1919. Ibid. l. 1370.

[56] The main working body of the Versailles Conference, made up of representatives of the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan.

[57] Note to telegram no. 44[85208/11/57] from Lord Curzon to Sir Charles Eliot (Vladivostok). June 11, 1919. *DBFR*. Vol. 3. P. 360.

[58] Extract from Notes of a Meeting held at President Wilson's House in the Place des Etats-Unis, Paris, June 3. *DBFR*. Vol. 3. P. 342.

[59] Lord Curzon to Sir Charles Eliot (Vladivostok), telegram no. 44[85208/11/57], June 11, 1919. *DBFR*. Vol. 3. P. 360.

[60] Nabokov to the minister, telegram no. 276, June 5, 1919. Urgent. Private. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 1500.

[61] Extract from Notes of a Meeting held at President Wilson's House in the Place des Etats-Unis, Paris, June 3. *DBFR*. Vol. 3. P. 342.

defending our interests on their merits, we do not alienate circles that are sympathetic towards us with unduly harsh language."[62] And those in Paris saw where he was coming from. Having travelled a difficult road, his colleagues also learned to look at things realistically: "No matter how unacceptable the proposal of the Powers is in the form in which it has been made," Maklakov noted in a telegram, "the very fact that such an appeal should be considered as the tables turning in our favour, which, through negotiations, can be used to achieve a formulation of the question that is acceptable to us."[63]

The minister rushed to Paris and wrote to Omsk that as soon as he had familiarized himself with the exact wording of the statement drafted by the powers, he would pen a response, and he asked that no one make any statements to foreign representatives in the meantime.[64]

The reality turned out to be even worse. At that critical moment, the lack of unity in the anti-Bolshevik camp reached its peak, and the Allied countries were quick to take advantage of this.

Having ignored both the unification of anti-Bolshevik centres in Russia and the Russian diplomatic mission, the Allies sent copies of their statement to all heads of Russian governments through their channels. Kolchak received his copy from the French Chargé at Omsk, De Martel, and he was not given any time to mull it over. Noting that the issue had to be resolved before Wilson headed back to the United States, the French representative demanded an immediate answer.

Knowing nothing about these developments, Sazonov, even before leaving London, sketched out some comments on the substance of the conference address. Having arrived back in Paris on June 3, the minister turned these notes into an official response, which he then sent to Omsk for approval. Noting that it was of utmost importance to follow the generally accepted "rule in international relations where statements to foreign governments are always made through their representatives in the latter,"[65] he insisted that the response to the Allied powers must be conveyed in Paris through him.

In the preamble of his response, the Russian minister tried to "dot all the i's," noting that the Russian government understood the memorandum drafted by the powers as "the intention to recognize the Admiral Kolchak's government as the All-Russian government." That is, on the one hand, it defined the intentions of the powers as recognition of the Omsk government, and, on the other hand, it stressed that the government was an All-Russian one, and not a local one.

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[62] Sazonov to Vologodsky, telegram no. 260, May 28, 1919. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 1394; GARF. f. 200. op. 1. d. 334. l. 90.
[63] Maklakov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, secret telegram no. 1140, May 29, 1919, *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 336. l. 125.
[64] Sazonov to Vologodsky, telegram no. 260, May 28, 1919. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 1394.
[65] Sazonov to Miller, telegram no. 1180. telegram no. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 352. l. 73–74; d. 334. l. 67.

On the merits of the points formulated by the Allies, he proposed the following arguments:

1. The government has repeatedly declared its firm intention to convene a Constituent Assembly at the first opportunity, but the Constituent Assembly that was elected under the Bolshevik regime cannot be reconvened, even temporarily.
2. There is no fighting in any of the regions to which Admiral Kolchak's power extends. Municipal and zemstvo institutions have already been restored there and are functioning as they should, and the same will happen everywhere as the territory is cleared, and new elections to these institutions will be allowed.
3. Civil and religious freedom constitute the basic principles of the Provisional Government, which has no intention of restoring class privileges.
4. Russia has already recognized the independence of Poland within its ethnographic borders. The independence of Finland can only be legally consecrated by the Constituent Assembly, while ensuring the security of Russia. Demarcation with Russia must be established through direct negotiations. If no agreement can be reached, then the sides can appeal to the League of Nations for friendly assistance, assuming Russia is a member of it.
5. In the new Russia, foreigners, while remaining a part of the Russian state, will be provided with a regime that preserves their minority rights. The limits and forms of autonomy will be determined by the Constituent Assembly, on whose rights the government cannot infringe. Russia may turn to the League of Nations for advice and cooperation in order to resolve potential problems. Until a new modus vivendi is established for the border regions, the Russian Government will "temporarily take the current situation into account, without objecting to the recognition of the autonomy of the Allied Powers, with the *de facto* authorities in these regions" [this is the wording of the text – *author's note*], but without prejudicing the future.
6. In the Bessarabia counties with a Moldovan majority, the population can be polled on the issue of joining Romania. But such a poll can only be carried out with the consent of the Constituent Assembly, and with full respect for impartiality under the control of the League of Nations.
7. Russia is willing to join the League of Nations, but only on equal terms with the five great powers. Russia will happily cooperate with the League of Nations on issues of arms limitation, and will comply, to the same extent as the other great powers, with decisions that will be taken jointly.

According to all its previous statements, Russia has no issue with agreeing to take on all government debt accrued before the Bolshevik coup.[66]

[66] Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, secret telegram no. 1180, June 3, 1919. Ibid. d. 334 l. 67.

A closer look at this document reveals that Sazonov had summarized the views that existed among Russian politicians in Paris, had already been expressed in one form or another, and did not make a single additional concession. In keeping with the tasks that Omsk continued to give its diplomatic representatives, Sazonov wanted to delay the resolution of most issues until a new Constituent Assembly had been elected, which could only happen after the Bolsheviks had been defeated. The minister had no objections to the participation of the League of Nations in the consideration of many contentious issues, as the Allies insisted, but only if Russia was admitted into the League as an equal partner with the great powers. And, finally, the most pressing issue was the federalization of the formerly unitary state. There was a significant gap in the views of Russian politicians in Paris and the military command at home on this issue. In March 1919, the Russian delegation, without the consent of the centre, submitted a memorandum to the chairman of the peace conference allowing for changes to be made to the state structure of Russia. This angered Kolchak, and he forbade the document from being published in Siberia. But he did not disavow it. Six months later, Denikin would ban the word "autonomy" on his territory.[67]

A few days later, it became clear that Sazonov had rushed to Paris in vain and his response had been drawn up in haste. Not long before that episode, the minister, citing the snail's pace at which things were moving, insisted on his right to sometimes "act in accordance with the requirements of the situation on the ground" without the consent of the government.[68] Now Omsk, considering that "any delay would not be justified by the circumstances and, bearing in mind the existence of indisputable fundamental principles,"[69] did not consult with its diplomats in Paris. The Kolchak government prepared its own response and handed it over the French representative on the day the memorandum was received (June 3). Sazonov was asked to insist that Kolchak's response was to be considered a unified response of all the "national" centres of Russia, and it did not need additional confirmation from or negotiations with Arkhangelsk and Yekaterinodar.[70]

"Kolchak's response," as it came to be known, was drawn up by the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I. I. Sukin, and it looked very different from Sazonov's draft, although it did not depart from the "indisputable basic principles." In general, the minister, who had not been involved in the development of the document, was happy with it, noting that the young diplomat had made three more or less serious calculations: first, that he missed the opportunity to "take the counterparties at their word," without stating that the Russian authorities understood the Allies' memorandum as the beginning of the recognition process. In addition, he noted the absence

[67] *Strictly Private and Confidential!* P. 232.
[68] Minister to Maklakov, telegram no. 254, May 27. Carbon copy to Omsk. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 1367.
[69] Admiral Kolchak to Sazonov, draft telegram, June 3, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 333. l. 24.
[70] Kolchak to Sazonov, June 3, 1919. Ibid.

of indications that the independence of Poland had been recognized within its ethnographic borders, while the recognition of Finland's independence is predicated on the decision of the future Constituent Assembly. However, Kolchak's note only mentioned Finland's autonomy along with the Baltic border regions and the Caucasus. Later, Sukin himself pointed out several more issues that the Omsk government's note did not address. The issue of a plebiscite for Bessarabia, the recognition of temporary agreements between the Allies and "national groupings" in Russia, and equality with the great powers in the League of Nations, were not broached at all. Sukin explained these omissions by saying that he did not want to prejudice the course of further negotiations. As far as he was concerned, "the response had been drafted in such a way that the government would not lose anything, even if recognition was not achieved."[71] In a telegram to Kolchak's representatives in the Far East and the United States, Sukin stressed that his response contained a summary repetition of previous declarations on foreign, and especially domestic, policy. The document does not contain any concessions from the Russian side, it "fully preserves the national dignity of Russia and maintains a democratic tone."[72] However, the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Omsk government wrote these words in mid-June, that is, after the Allies had issued a response.

Sazonov was disgruntled with the step taken by Kolchak and did not comment further on the exchange of diplomatic notes between the Western powers and Omsk and what this led to.

Kolchak did not receive a response from the Allied Powers until June 12, as their representatives were preoccupied with work on the peace treaty with Germany. Against the backdrop of Kolchak's successful offensive, the heads of power were satisfied with Omsk's answers, but the matter of recognition – as a national or local government – was not brought up at all. The closest thing to this was the readiness expressed by the Powers in the telegram to provide the anti-Bolshevik movement with food and equipment to help it consolidate its power as the government of the whole country (Churchill 1932: 116–118).

This time, Sazonov was promptly informed of the content of the response and tried in advance to mitigate the disappointment it was likely to cause in Omsk. He informed Kolchak that the demarche "is considered by the public as a turn of policy towards Russia,"[73] and proposed treating it as a stage on the path towards recognition. At the same time, he stressed that the further steps of the Allies moving forward would depend on the military successes of the Siberian armed forces. In these conditions,

[71] Sukin to Sazonov, telegram no. 477, June 17, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 335. l. 126.

[72] Sukin to the Russian Representation in Tokyo, Beijing and Washington, and the Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Far East, June 1, 1919. Ibid. d. 333. l. 40.

[73] Sazonov to the Supreme Ruler, telegram no. 1277, June 12, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 115. l. 84.

Sazonov saw his task as working to expand the political significance of the provision that had been created, using it to gain "a number of practical achievements in terms of financing and supplies."[74]

On June 16, de Martel, without any prior notice, transferred the telegram from the Allies to the Supreme Ruler of Russia. Kolchak and his team were, unsurprisingly, disappointed. That very same day, Sukin wrote that "the response of the Powers was accepted by the Supreme Ruler with the same indifference that characterizes the general attitude of the government towards the issue of recognition."[75] The Omsk authorities listened to the advice of their minister and decided to make the most of the promises they had received. Sazonov was instructed to find out exactly what kind of assistance the Allies were promising: "Can we count on an influx of supplies from America, the ability to open lines of credit in foreign currencies, the provision of significant tonnage for transportation, etc.?" On the other hand, the government believed that it would be necessary in the coming weeks to take stock of the military situation on all fronts, as well as the situation in the Far East and the matter of protecting the railway, and discuss practical measures to this end with the Allies.[76]

Meanwhile, the French High Commissioner in Siberia congratulated the Omsk government on its diplomatic success, which many evidently took as a mocking jab at them. In any case, Sukin wrote to Sazonov that "whatever the High Commissioner means by this, we are not sure."[77] Kolchak responded with a telegram which, in the words of the French General Maurice Janin, the representative of the High Inter-Allied Command in Omsk, was full of "touching liberalism" (Janin 1930: 120).

Thus, no progress was made on the issue of the recognition of Kolchak's government. One positive outcome from the exchange of notes was the formal establishment of supplies for the White Armies. Mutual suspicion penetrated deeper and deeper into the relationship between the Allies and the White Movement. Janin wrote that "the locals, given the material and moral benefits that recognition will bring, are prepared to promise everything that is asked of them, and then some."[78]

Seeing that the issue of recognition, and with it the legalization of the Russian diplomatic corps as the official representatives of the Omsk government, had been put on the back burner once again, Sazonov decided that he could no longer put up with this most frustrating situation. International relations is a sphere that is subject to certain regulations. Without observing these formalities, representative offices were unable to feel comfortable in their activities. At the same time, they continued to spin their wheels as representatives of governments (Imperial and Provisional) that had long since sunk into oblivion, taking advantage of the leniency shown by the Powers.

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[74] Sazonov to Vologodsky, telegram no. 68, June 17, 1919. *GARF*. f. 193. op. 1. d. 16. l. 64–65.
[75] Sukin to Sazonov, telegram no. 1005, June 16, 1919. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 1630.
[76] Sukin to Sazonov, telegram no. 100, June 17, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 113. l. 64.
[77] Sukin to the minister, telegram no. 1059, June 20, 1919. *GARF*. f.10003. op. 2. P. 13; f. 200. op. 1. d. 334. l. 37.
[78] Ibid. P. 143–144.

The position of Sazonov – not only on the international stage, but also within the foreign department itself – was unclear. In the past, Russian ambassadors were appointed by legitimate, albeit now defunct, governments, and all of them (with the exception of Maklakov) were accredited as such; Sazonov, on the other hand, was a minister of government that no state except Serbia recognized. And everyone knew this, both at home and in international affairs. The act he conceived intended to correct this situation somewhat: to equalize competencies by making the department a full-fledged representative office of the Omsk government.

Sazonov wrote to Kolchak on June 16: "it would be advisable for you to instruct me, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, to notify foreign missions on your behalf that you have confirmed the powers of Russian representatives that have been extended to them. It would also be advisable for you to inform foreign diplomats in Omsk that you have sent me such an instruction."[79] It would take over a month for the Supreme Ruler to make his decision, which came at the end of July and was exactly in line with what Sazonov had advised.[80]

In the summer and autumn of 1919, General Denikin's offensive started to make inroads. In September, he launched an attack on Moscow. In October, Yudenich's long-anticipated attack on Petrograd began. These events marked a new stage of work on the international recognition of the White Movement. It had long been obvious to diplomats that the issue of international recognition directly depended on the course of military operations in the Civil War. The minister tried to get this message across the leadership of the White Movement. "Recognition of the Russian government," he wrote, "will depend on the success of our armies and the organization of life in areas cleared of the Bolsheviks."[81] He received the backing of the longer-standing representatives of the diplomatic corps, who believed that the delay in considering the issue was down to the internal affairs of the Allies, "in the instability of persecuted political entities, and partly in the strength of our military successes."[82] But the director of the foreign policy department was inspired by the recent successes of the White armies, and he promised, if things continued to go well, to start insisting on this issue once again.[83]

On September 24, the Russian delegation again submitted a memorandum to the Allied Supreme Council in Paris, insisting on the recognition of the Kolchak government.[84] Getting to work on this issue, Sazonov recommended that the heads of the Russian embassies in the United States and Great Britain strongly insist that the

[79] Sazonov to Admiral Kolchak, telegram no. 1333, June 16, 1919. *AVPRI*. f. 190. op. 525. d. 2541. l. 1635.
[80] Sukin to Sazonov, July 23, 1919. Ibid. l. 103.
[81] Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, secret telegram no. 2387-207, September 26, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 333 l. 4.
[82] Ibid. l. 12.
[83] Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, secret telegram no. 2269-1807, September 16, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 335. l. 77.
[84] Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, secret telegram no. 2367-202, September 24, 1919. Ibid. d. 333. l. 4.

representatives of these countries be instructed to promote the international recognition of Kolchak in the Council of Five. He suggested that his colleagues draw the attention of the governments of heir host countries to the significant harm that further delays in recognition would cause, depriving the White Movement of the opportunity to use a number of measures in the fight against the Bolsheviks, and stressed that "it will be easier for the Allies themselves to fulfil the promises they made to Admiral Kolchak after recognition."[85]

The information coming from these countries was rather optimistic. The Embassy in London reported: "The newspapers are full of stories about our victories, and public opinion rushes to the aid of the victors."[86] In Washington, Ambassador Bakhmeteff characterized the developments as a "favourable phase." He believed that the Americans were ready to make a decision on the matter, but were still waiting for a decisive outcome to the war against the Bolsheviks.[87] However, it soon became clear that the military successes were nothing more than the faint echo of the victories of the summer campaign.

Evgeny Sablin, who replaced Nabokov as the head of the Embassy in London, took the problem with great enthusiasm. He held negotiations with the head of the Russian department of the Foreign Office, John Gregory, sought to influence the Prime Minister by engaging with English politicians who were sympathetic to the White Movement, and wrote daily letters to the editor of *The Times* in order to increase the level of his support.[88] Looking at the arguments used, we can make fairly good assumptions about how Russian diplomats approached and conducted negotiations on this issue.

To start with, Sablin tried to convince his counterparties that recognition would be beneficial to England itself. First, the Bolsheviks pose a threat to British interests in Turkestan, Afghanistan and India. And "an organized and strong Russia on the border with Persia, Afghanistan and India is necessary if England wants to keep hold of India." Sablin pointed to the fact that an Afghan Embassy was operating in Moscow, and noted that there were a number of Soviet experts in Middle Eastern studies who, being well acquainted with the state of affairs in the region, were capable of causing all kinds of problems for the British there. Second, Sablin pointed to the danger that Germany could establish "a regime that Lloyd George fears" in Russia. Finally, Sablin did not miss the opportunity to repeat the maxim about "the influence of London's position in the current circumstances on future relations between the two countries in general, and in the East in particular."[89]

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[85] Minister to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Omsk, Neratov (in Taganrog), Bakhmeteff (in Washington), Sablin (in London), telegram no. 2367/202, September 24, 1919. *GARF*. f. 10003. op. 2. P. 3.

[86] Sablin to Sukin, telegram no. 715, October 18, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 335. l. 47.

[87] Envoy in Beijing (transmits Bakhmeteff's telegram) to the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, secret telegram no. 189, September 22, 1919. Ibid. l. 73.

[88] Sablin to Sukin, telegram no. 715, October 18, 1919. Ibid. l. 47.

[89] Sablin to Sazonov, October 16, 1919. From the archive of the organizers of the intervention in Russia. 1961. Historical archive, telegram no. 6. P. 92–93.

Sablin called on England to be more active in bringing up the issue of recognition of the Omsk government "as much in its interests as in ours" and promised to help disseminate news of England's role as widely as possible in Russia.[90]

The diplomat continued to work on the problem throughout October 1919.[91] On November 1, his latest enquiry about the recognition of the Kolchak government received the answer that "the news from Siberia is unsatisfactory; Kolchak will probably have to retreat; and, under the present circumstances, now is not the right time for recognition. It will be a different matter once Denikin takes Moscow. The British government will have a decision on recognition ready by then."[92] On November 4, Sazonov wrote from Paris that "the taking of Petrograd will deal a serious blow to Bolshevism and, which will in turn increase the authority of the Russian government and accelerate its recognition."[93]

The situation on the eastern and north-western fronts had taken a turn for the worse and this, coupled with the fact that the offensives on the southern front had been suspended, meant that further discussion of the issue was frozen yet again. Sazonov tried to put a positive spin on the defeats of the White armies in Russia. However, despite the fact that Lloyd George's suggestion that new proposals be put forwards in the spirit of Prinkipo was harshly condemned by the French and, apparently, American governments, the situation could not be turned around through diplomatic negotiations.[94] When the Kolchak government moved from Omsk to Irkutsk in late December 1919, on the eve of the arrest of the Supreme Ruler by the Czechs, Sazonov made another attempt to achieve recognition of his government by the Slavic state. The Bulgarian government's search for contacts with the White Movement provided grounds for establishing conditions for it. The Minister demanded first and foremost that Sofia publish news that it was ready "to recognize the Russian government led by Admiral Kolchak and represented in the south by General Denikin."[95] But time was already working against the Whites.

The Diplomatic Corps and the Issue of Recognition of the Wrangel Government

In the spring of 1920, the issue of recognition was inherited, albeit in a slightly modified form, by the government of Pyotr Wrangel.

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Sablin to Sukin, telegram no. 748, October 24, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 335. l. 42.

[92] Sablin to the Minister, telegram no. 779, November 1, 1919. *GARF*. f. 10003. op. 2. k. 12.

[93] Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Omsk), secret telegram no. 2913-312, November 4, 1919. *GARF*. f. 200. op. 1. d. 280. l. 164.

[94] Foreign Minister, secret telegram no. 3021-327, November 13, 1919. Ibid. d. 333. l. 54.

[95] Sazonov to Minister of Foreign Affairs Neratov (Taganrog), telegram no. 339-387, December 25, 1919. *GARF*. f.10003. op. 2. P. 3.

On the one hand, the Whites in the last stronghold of anti-Bolshevism in European Russia, the Crimean Peninsula, as well as the Movement's representatives abroad, were no longer thinking about "equality" or participation in world political processes. The Russian foreign diplomatic corps itself took a position that was somewhat independent of the Crimean authorities, nominating Mikhail von Giers as their leader. Von Giers shared responsibility for conducting the Whites' foreign policy with the appointed head of government Wrangel and the Head of the Department of External Relations, Peter Struve. In the new conditions, the best the new government could hope for was *de facto* recognition, on the same grounds on which such recognition was given to border regions during the Civil War. But even this turned out to be problematic given the situation in the Russian enclave at the time.

On the other hand, the Sevastopol authorities managed to circumvent the framework within which the issue was resolved in 1919. The leaders of the Movement, General Baron Wrangel and his government, set themselves the task of quickly restoring relations with the "former enemy countries."

In the summer of 1920, an attempt was made to achieve recognition by the Ottoman Empire. The Sublime Porte avoided the issue, although the Grand vizier did agree to recognize all diplomatic rights and privileges of the Russian diplomatic mission in Istanbul, which had resumed its work at the beginning of 1919, and the rights recognized for other Europeans for the Russian people (Mikhailovsky 1992: 582–583).

That autumn, a group of German industrialists led by Wagner that was interested in acquiring concessions took steps to re-establish official relations between Germany and the Wrangel government. Having rejected economic initiatives for "formal" reasons, the Commander-in-Chief showed an interest in opening diplomatic missions in Germany and Austria, and if official relations could not be established, the "principle of official representation" would be acceptable. The government attached great importance to this issue, putting it ahead even of military actions: on October 14, the Commander-in-Chief stressed the "urgent need" to resolve this issue, and his sentiments were reiterated on November 5 by the Chairman of the Council of Chiefs of Directorates Alexander Krivoshein.[96]

At the same time, the Hungarian government took the initiative to establish diplomatic relations with Sevastopol, stating that it was even ready to finance a Russian mission that would receive official accreditation in Budapest. Curiously, the discussion of this issue took place on the eve of the fall of Crimea, so even the defeat of Wrangel's forces and their evacuation from the peninsula did not take the issue off the table. Colonel of the General Staff Alexei von Lampe was assigned to Budapest as a military agent in late 1921. That summer, Prince P. Volkonsky's name was included in the list of Russian diplomatic agents as an official representative in Hungary.[97]

[96] *GARF*. f. 6851. op. 1. d. 63. l. 1, 2.
[97] *GARF*. f. 5760. op. 1. d. 5. l. 27.

Meanwhile, the process of establishing relations with the Entente countries became more complicated. After the defeat of Kolchak, and then Denikin, London decided that it no longer made any sense to support the Whites and expressed its readiness to be a mediator in negotiations on their surrender to the Bolsheviks. The British authorities developed contacts with the Soviet government, making it clear that they wanted to establish trade relations, which effectively meant recognition. Then, for the first time in a year, Paris emerged from London's shadow in resolving the Russian question, following its consistent support for Poland in the fight against the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

Some researchers (Carley 2017: 52–73; Grishanin, Yermakov 2006: 118) conclude that France was less concerned about its relations with the Wrangel government than it was about its ties with Warsaw. Crimea became more important for Paris after the Polish forces suffered defeats in the war with Soviet Russia. It attracted particular attention from the French cabinet after the Poles were routed in June. Peter Struve just so happened to be in Paris at the time, took full advantage of this, delivering a series of reports on the situation in Russia in which he described Russia's successes and noted the new approaches of the high command in its domestic and foreign policies.[98] On June 20, the Head of Wrangel's Department of External Relations submitted a memorandum outlining the Sevastopol government's programme to the French Foreign Ministry, The next day, Struve and Maklakov were granted an audience with the French Prime Minister Alexandre Millerand, who assured the two men that clarity and firmness of Crimea's internal policy, as well as a "sincere readiness to act together with the Poles," were very important for Paris. Moreover, he considered it necessary to maintain contacts between the British authorities and the Sevastopol government; this way, the issue of negotiations based on the inviolability of Crimea and the Cossack territories, as well as the "cleansing of the territories of the Caucasian political entities, in which England itself is interested," would remain open. In this regard, Millerand recommended restraint and that the Crimean side treat calls from London for direct negotiations with the Bolsheviks, proposals for mediation in discussing Wrangel's surrender, and amnesty for his supporters, as friendly advice, "which cannot be followed."[99] The meeting of the Supreme War Council in Boulogne on June 20 confirmed the willingness of the countries involved to proceed with the economic negotiations that had been launched with the Soviet side.

Struve listened to Millerand's advice and went to England, where he was faced with the consistent reluctance of the British side to "talk […] in a diplomatic manner."[100] The circumstances for such negotiations were unfavourable: the Poles had suffered setbacks on the front in the fight against the Bolsheviks, and the Soviet government had made it clear that it was willing to take part in the negotiations proposed by England.

[98] Ibid.
[99] *GARF*. f. 10003. op. 11. k. 174. l. 6.
[100] Struve via Sablin, telegram no. 426, July 12, 1920 *AVPRI*. f. 187. op. 524 d. 3549. l. 44. rev.

While in London, Struve, together with the head of the Russian Embassy, Sablin, formulated the immediate tasks of Russian diplomacy. This meant trying to "convince both the French and the English that the question of peace must be turned into a common problem, including ensuring our existence within the borders we currently occupy, and *de jure* international recognition."[101] Another task was to explain to the French side the danger, on an international scale, of recognizing only the Bolsheviks, which was seen, in particular, "in the Near and Middle East, where rapprochement of the Russian patriotic forces left by the Allies with national Bolshevik elements may take place." Such an alliance, the Russian diplomats argued, would most certainly be directed against the Entente.[102]

Having failed to achieve anything of note in London, Struve went to Belgium for the Allied Conference in Spa, accompanied by the Counsellor of the Embassy in Paris, Nikolai Bazili.[103] The Head of Wrangel's Department of External Relations insisted that von Giers also go to Spa,[104] although the old guard of the Russian diplomatic corps, who, as we mentioned earlier, had already handed responsibility for the negotiations with the French to Maklakov, declined the invitation.

Following the events of October 1917, the diplomats positioned themselves as representatives of a united Russia. Although the future of the Sevastopol government, whose chances of bringing the entire country under its control were miniscule – a fact that Wrangel understood all too well – caused them to second-guess what they were doing. They were wary of demonstrating any connection with the Crimean authorities, lest they lose, in the event of Crimea's defeat, the "grace of continuity" they still enjoyed and which would allow them to continue their work if the Civil War were to end in a way that was not to their liking. At the same time, however, they could not in good conscience refuse to support the efforts of Wrangel's diplomacy. As the "guardian" of the Russian diplomatic corps, von Giers was, apparently deliberately, taken out of the scope of the work in this most difficult of circumstances.

All that notwithstanding, the diplomats nervously watched the struggle that unfolded in Spa. Lloyd George, who continued to insist on concluding a trade agreement with Soviet Russia (which would amount to de facto recognition of the Soviet government), put forward an initiative that would end the Polish–Soviet War and the Russian Civil War. He suggested that England act as a mediator in the peace negotiations, proposing a conference to which Wrangel's representatives would be invited in the sole capacity of support staff to discuss the terms of surrender. The question of recognition of the Sevastopol government could thus not be raised under these circumstances.

[101] Struve via Sablin, telegram no. 423, July 11, 1920 Ibid. l. 33. rev.
[102] Struve via Sablin, telegram no. 426, July 12, 1920. Ibid. l. 44. rev.
[103] Sablin to N. A. Bazili (from Struve), telegram no. 423, July 11, 1920. Ibid. l. 33. rev.
[104] D. A. Nelidov to Maklakov, telegram no. 1430, July 13, 1920. Ibid. l. 48. rev.

However, it became increasingly obvious at the Conference that the positions of England and France on issues related to Poland and the Sevastopol government were moving further and further apart.[105]

Everyone at the Conference waited anxiously for the Bolsheviks' response to the new proposals of the British Prime Minister. When it came, the rudely worded rejection pushed, which was worried about the Poles (its last ally against Germany) losing to the Soviets, to take decisive action.

On July 23, Struve informed the French Foreign Ministry that he had been authorized to officially recognize all international agreements concluded by the previous Russian governments (Carley 2017: 60). Having received assurances that the French government was going to recognize Wrangel *de facto,* Struve set off for Crimea. In early August, he informed von Giers about the obligations the government would assume in the event of recognition: the readiness to take on all obligations of previous governments; the introduction of agrarian reform; and the introduction, once the Civil War is over, of free and fair elections.[106]

However, time passed, but recognition never came. On August 4, Struve, with von Giers at his side, addressed the Embassy in Paris, requesting that the resolution of the issue be expedited.[107] It is telling that Struve did not task the old-timer with this. But von Giers nevertheless found an opportune moment to get involved in the common cause, meeting with Millerand and giving him all the necessary assurances. On August 8, the Russian Embassy in Paris sent an official request for *de facto* recognition. According to Michael Carley, the last straw for Paris, the moment that tipped it towards recognition, came on August 10 (the eve of the Battle of Warsaw), when Llyod George, without talking to Millerand, told the Poles they should make peace with the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Carley 2017: 61).

That very day, August 10, 1920, France *de facto* recognized the Wrangel government. Von Giers subsequently made a statement to the press about the main tasks and goals of Wrangel's policy. Having received permission to make a statement in advance, he did not have time to coordinate its wording with Sevastopol. The Commander-in-Chief was mostly satisfied with von Giers' speech, with the exception of the "overemphasis on 'our democracy'" and the phrase "about the legal sanctification of the seizure of land committed by the peasantry during the Revolution" (Wrangel 1992).

The representatives of the Russian diplomatic corps reacted to this long-awaited event with a healthy dose of scepticism. Even Bazili, who was directly involved in the negotiations, was far from euphoric. He admitted that "*de facto* recognition determines the attitude of the French government in the near future and opens up the possibility

[105] Reports from N. A. Bazili to Giers, via Nelidov, June 14 and June 17, 1920. Ibid. l. 46. rev., 47.
[106] A. A. Neratov to the Embassy in Paris, telegram no. 617 (Struve to Maklakov), August 3, 1920. *AVPRI*. f. 187. op. 524. d. 3549 l. 94 rev.
[107] Struve to B.A. Maklakov, Bazili, telegram no. 623, August 4, 1920. *GARF*. f. 10003. op. 11. k. 174. l. 122.

of significant relief in matters of supplies," but at the same time he warned that the policy line of the French government depended on "the general situation in the relations of Western powers among themselves, and with the Bolsheviks." He recommended taking advantage of the situation to get everything they could and not delay applications for military materials and equipment.[108] There is evidence to suggest that Struve's deputy, Prince Georgy Trubetskoy saw this step as an attempt by France to establish a protectorate over Crimea without providing any real assistance (Mikhailovsky 1992: 616). In diplomatic circles, some believed that recognition in 1919 would have eventually forced the Allies to take direct military action, while in the political landscape of 1920, recognition of the Wrangel government could come down to nothing more than moral support (Mikhailovsky 1992: 616). In a letter to Bakhmeteff, Maklakov said he had had no hand in the matter, citing the fact that he had been ill these past months and was thus unable to participate in the general work. Maklakov added that the news of having received recognition did not give him any satisfaction. He "feared a violent protest from the British and a retreat from the French." The ambassador saw the recognition of the *de facto* government of the South of Russia as a "polemical" gesture, which, "like any gesture, had the property of teasing some, promising others, while delivering nothing."[109] The enthusiasm that had gripped Crimea concerned him: there were constant calls to quickly achieve recognition from other countries; questions about the legal consequences of such recognition; instructions to transfer the remaining state funds to the Wrangel government as the recognized authority; and calls for uniting Russian and Polish troops in the fight against the Bolsheviks under the command of the French.[110]

Conclusion

Throughout the Civil War, international recognition of the non-Bolshevik government was the single most important task of the Russian diplomatic corps, which continued its work abroad. The diplomats understood the enduring importance of this issue for the country's future: recognition was the only way they could they get a place at the table at the peace conference held following the First World War, and thus a voice in determining the configuration of the future world order; and recognition was the only way they could count on assistance for the armed struggle against the Bolsheviks.

A very small circle of diplomatic corps employees was involved in the consideration of the issue: Sergei Sazonov as Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mikhail von Giers and the most experienced member of the corps and Ambassador to Italy; Vasily Maklakov

[108] Bazili to Struve, telegram no. 1158, August 12(25), 1920; Pipes R. 1963. Les relations diplomatiques du gouvernement Wrangel en Crimée, 1920. *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique.* 4(4-4). P. 422.
[109] "Strictly Private and Confidential." V. A. Maklakov to B. A. Bakhmeteff, September 6, 1920. Vol. 1. P. 226.
[110] Ibid. P. 228.

as Ambassador in Paris; Boris Bakhmeteff as Ambassador in Washington; Konstantin Nabokov and Evgeny Sablin as Charge d'Affaires in Great Britain; Envoy to China Prince Nikolai Kudashev and Ambassador to Japan Vasily Krupensky during the early stages; and Nikolai Bazili, Counsellor at the Russian Embassy in Paris, during the final stages. However, we should bear in mind that behind all of these men stood an embassy with its own staff or circle of trusted representatives.

Russia's diplomats initially found themselves in the unusual situation of having to take part in the creation of a Russian government that was capable of gaining international recognition. The new place of the diplomatic corps in the hierarchy of power in the conditions of the Civil War allowed it to not so much obey the government as act with it on a parity basis: to propose its own concept and vision of the situation and develop an approach to solving the problem of international recognition.

The diplomatic corps approached this issue with great caution, and its members would not always agree on how exactly to go about it. The discussions conducted by Russian diplomacy did not touch upon the essence of the problem itself, but rather dealt with the tactics for solving it.

Realizing that the powers who would decide the issue of recognition were interested in a weakened Russia, the diplomatic corps demonstrated a willingness, to make concessions, something that was unacceptable for the military leadership of the White Government. Russian diplomats saw that the attitude of the Allies towards the issue of recognition was predicated on the success of the White armies, and they tried to make the Whites military leaders aware of this fact, but the Whites could not win without the help of the Allies, which would only come after recognition.

The extremely limited political field in which the diplomats were forced to operate was not conducive to achieving recognition of the Kolchak–Denikin governments in 1919. An attempt was made to resolve the issue by appealing to the Slavic countries, but only the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, on its own initiative, recognized the Kolchak government.

At the end of the Civil War, the diplomatic corps ceded the initiative to fight for international recognition of the White Movement to the Wrangel government, specifically to the head of its Department of External Relations, Peter Struve. The Sevastopol authorities expanded the scope of consideration of the issue, taking the first steps to restore relations with the countries that had lost the war. France, in continuation of its pro-Poland policy, de facto recognized Wrangel's government on the same grounds on which the powers had recognized the countries that had formerly belonged to the Russian Empire. The diplomatic corps supported Sevastopol's efforts in this regard, understanding that the move had come too late, and seeing no point in further fighting Soviet power. The diplomats were also aware that France's recognition of the Sevastopol government was grounded in reasons other than wanting to help the White Movement in its struggle inside Russia.

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